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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001272

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/PDA (MBUCKLEY); WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON DRUG TRAFFICKING, JUNE 3, 2003

1. Editorial on liberal daily "La Tribuna", Tegucigalpa based 6/3 entitled: "Plastic Jails". If Honduras does not demonstrate a serious interest on the fight against drug trafficking, it could become an issue which may harm the relationship between Honduras and the United States. This happened to Guatemala, which has recently been accused of a serious lack of compliance to international regulations concerning this issue.

Honduras worked closely with the United States in the fight against drug trafficking. Now, there are more severe laws to penalize narco trafficking, as well as other criminal activities related to drug trafficking, such as money laundering.

However, there is no point if the Honduran authorities arrest and convict people responsible of such actions if the bars of its jails are made of plastic. This situation could be much worse if it is true that some authorities have collaborated in the escape of these criminals, as in the case of two convicted drug dealers who escaped when they were taken back to prison under police custody.

Pierce